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Philadelphia.

Dr. Constantin Hering.

Viertes Heft, 1907.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
— OF —
DR. CONSTANTIN HERING.

COMPILED BY HIS DAUGHTER.

Dr. Constantin Hering's ancestors came from Moravia, and wrote their name Hrinka. His father, Carl Gottlieb Hering, an affectionate, gentle-natured man, was educated at the Fürstenschule in Meissen, the same at which Hahnemann received his early education, and later went to the University of Leipsic.

He was educated for the ministry, but when preaching his trial sermon, refused to cover his own luxuriant blonde hair with a peruke, for which he was censured as lacking in proper respect, and summoned before the Synod. In answering the charge, he took up a lock of his hair, and said, "Why should I hide and cover God's handiwork by that of man?" In consequence he was accused of blasphemy and of having "Called God a penuquier." It still is so entered in the old church books.

After this he refused to be installed a minister, though he preached occasionally, and after some years the authorities wished to place him in a church. He devoted his life to teaching, and to music, which he loved ardently and devotedly.

He published many books on musical instruction, and a collection of children's song that is used to this day.

He was of a refined, artistic nature; maintained that early impressions were most powerful in their influence on later life, and banished, as far as he was able, from his home all that was not good, beautiful and true.

Before his marriage he lived in Leipsic, later he accepted a position in Oschatz, where Dr. Constantin Hering was born, with the new century, on January 1, 1800.

It was customary to welcome the New Year by a service in the church. The father, who was a noted organist, was in church, seated at the organ, when a friend brought him the news of the birth of a son, and immediately the organ pealed forth the grand old choral, "Nun danket Alle Gott," with such volume and inspired expression, that people in the church afterwards said, "It sounded as though the heavens had opened, and angels with trumpets were blowing the choral."

In defiance of a prevalent superstition, Constantin, the name of Magister Hering's first son, who had died in infancy, was also given to this child.

As Oschatz lay on what was then the highway from Dresden to Leipsic, travelers of note often stopped there to see Magister Hering, who was a well-known man. Dr. Hering remembered many of these guests, and doubtless many of them, and especially their conversations with his father, influenced the impressionable mind of the young boy.

He sometimes told of remembering sitting on Chladni's knee and listening to his wonderful account of the "Klang Figuren." Seumes' talk about America and democracy doubtless inspired the listening child with love of freedom and aversion of privileged classes.

His early teachers were persons of like character as his father; one in particular exerted a great influence on him; and he always spoke with the greatest affection and veneration of his "Lehrer Rudolph."

He had no liking for the study of history, but a great love for that of nature, and once incurred a reproof from his beloved teacher, Herr Rudolph, by refusing in a composition that he had to write, to call Peter of Russia, Peter the Great, with youthful audacity writing, "Peter, whom fools call great." He well remembered the battle of Jena, and the march of a portion of Napoleon's army through Saxony, on their way to Russia.

On this march a company of soldiers halted before Magister Hering's house, and demanded food. Constantin, then a lad of twelve, ran out and gave them a loaf of newly baked rye bread, which the officer flung on the ground and the soldiers kicked about. The boy cried out indignantly, "It's good bread, my mother baked it; don't you know that God will punish you for desecrating bread?"

After the fatal retreat it chanced that the same squad came and begged for food. The lad again came to succor the poor wretches, this time offering them wheaten bread; the same officer, in rags, his arm in a sling, recognized the boy: "Ah! my lad," he said, "the curse you told us of, has fallen upon us."

The boy developed a great and enthusiastic love for the study of natural sciences. His collection of insects, minerals and plants, occupied all the hours that could be spared from school.

Among the books in his library was a small work on botany, numbering eighty-eight pages, and bearing the title, "Systematisches Verzeichniss in der Oberlansitz wildwachsenden Pflanzen von Karl Christian Oettel, 1799." On the fly leaf in the boy's handwriting are the words, "My first book on botany;" the interlinear marks, the underscorings and marginal notes on the well-worn pages of this little book, show how diligently the lad used it.

He often said jokingly that the Parcae who influence life came to him in reverse order, as the first stimulus to a love for natural sciences, was the accidental finding upon his father's grapevine of the caterpillar Sphynx Atropos. Then, when he, a young man in Surinam discovered the healing properties of the poison of the Suru kuku snake, he named the new remedy Lachesis, and finally, during the latter years of his life, he likened his labor of compiling from his mfs. his great work on Materia Medica, "Guiding Symptoms," to Clotho's holding the distaff and spinning threads, and when the work was well begun he said: "When I shall be called hence the work will be left ready on the loom for other hands to weave."

In 1817 Constantin was sent to an academy in Dresden, where he studied surgery. A year later a copy of Euclid literally fell into his hands at an old bookstall; the volume so deeply interested him that he resolved to go home, and devote himself to the study of Greek and mathematics, which he did under the guidance of Director Rudolph, who taught him to love mathematics as a science, not merely of dry formulas, but as a revelation of the laws of being.

In 1820 he entered the University at Leipsic. Later he went to the University at Würzburg, attracted by the fame of Professor Schönlein, under whom he graduated there with highest honors in 1826, and with him he formed a friendship which even his conversion to Homeopathy never disturbed.

At one time there were four sons of Magister Hering at the University of Leipsic, who were laughingly dubbed by their mates: "The four Herings." Ewald Hering, the next in age to Constantin, became a minister. His son, Geheimrath Ewald Hering, is to-day professor at Leipsic. Karl Eduard Hering devoted his life to music, and was by Mendelssohn pronounced the strongest musician on counterpoint in Europe. Julius Hering, whose special study was philology, and who bid fair to outshine them all, lost his life while yet a student at the university, in rescuing his dearest friend.

For nine years, from 1817 to 1826, Dr. Hering's life was devoted to study, his fellow-students gave him the college nickname (Studentennamen) "Der Alte Wisent," on account of his energetic application to study.

He was poor, and had to endure many privations, and so was quite ready to add to his exchequer by engaging to write a treatise which was to prove a deathblow to Homeopathy, and was to be published by Baumgärtner. When this work was almost finished, he came across Hahnemann's challenge: "Disprove ere you condemn!" When telling of this he would say: "In the arrogance of my youth, I thought this a sort of 'bluff,' and determined to take him at his word, with the result that Baumgärtner never got the wished-for refutation of Homeopathy."

An old friend, an apothecary, was greatly delighted to hear that he was writing against the new school, but when Dr. Hering went to this friend one day for tincture of Peruvian bark, wanting it, as he told him, for the purpose of making a Homeopathic proving, the man exclaimed: "My dear young friend, don't you do it; don't you know there is danger in that?" The young doctor replied that he was a student of mathematics and believed himself capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood.

From that time this old friend, and many other friends, turned from him. Some said compassionately that he was going crazy. And he himself admitted that he became almost a fanatic in the cause of Homeopathy, preaching it everywhere and at all times and seasons, like a very apostle.

A personal experience at this time also had a most decisive effect in his conversion. In making an autopsy on the body of a suicide, exhumed by the authorities, he accidentally became poisoned through an abrasion on one of his fingers. The wound became gangrenous. Leeches, calomel and caustics, the usual remedies at that time, proved of no avail, and his physicians said amputation of his hand was the last and only hope of saving his life. This he re-

jected, as the loss of his hand would be fatal to his chosen profession (surgery), and he would rather die than suffer it. Although at this time he was already deeply interested in the new teaching, he still believed it absurd to suppose that external diseases could be reached by internal remedies, and he ridiculed the proposition of an old disciple of Hahnemann to treat him with little pellets. However, to please his friend, but with no idea of receiving any benefit therefrom, he finally consented to take minute doses of arsenic.

He was cured, and when telling the story, would say: "Hahnemann saved my finger, and I gave him my whole hand, and to the promulgation of his teaching, not only my hand, but the entire man, soul and body."

He received his degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of Würzburg on the 23d of March, 1826, and wrote as his graduation thesis, "De Medicina Futura," in which he resolutely and ably maintained the doctrine of Hahnemann.

In the month of May, the same year, he was appointed instructor in mathematics and natural sciences in an academy—Blochmann's Institute, in Dresden. Some months later he was sent on an expedition to Surinam, by the King of Saxony, in charge of the zoological department of the expedition. He remained in Surinam for six years, still pursuing the study of Homeopathy and practicing there to some extent among the Moravian missionaries and settlers. He also wrote several articles for the Homeopathic Archives. This latter proceeding was brought to the notice of the king by enemies of Homeopathy in such a way as to cause him to direct Dr. Hering to attend solely to the duties of his appointment, and let outside matters alone. By return mail, the doctor sent in a report, his accounts in full, and resigned his official position, remaining a few years longer in Paramaribo, where he practiced, made researches and some valuable discoveries, and from where he sent many specimens to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia that are still to be found there.

He made many converts to Homeopathy and educated a student, Dr. George Bute, whom he sent north at the time of the outbreak of cholera in 1832, to try his skill in fighting the epidemic. While his student was successfully battling with the cholera in Philadelphia, he went among the lepers who were colonized in the vicinity of Paramaribo, outcasts from society, and although unable to cure more than a few, he did much to relieve the sufferings of many, and by his observations enriched the therapeutics of that dread disease—leprosy.

He sent numerous medical articles to his friend, Stapf, in Germany, who published them in his journal, "The Archives." He studied the habits and customs of the Creoles, mulattoes, negroes and Arrowackian Indians, and risked his life in becoming acquainted with this wild tribe, and here in the tropical forest made the discovery of the healing which lies in the poison of the Surukuku snake; one of Dr. Hering's additions to the Materia Medica, and which he named Lachesis.

In 1829 he married Charlotte Kemper, but lost his young wife soon after the birth of a son, and shortly thereafter determined to leave Surinam. Having always felt drawn towards the United States, the country in which the freedom he so loved, was most ample, he determined to visit it on his way home, and so turned his face northward.

The vessel in which he sailed was bound for Salem, Mass., and after a very stormy and protracted passage, put into Martha's Vineyard for a fresh supply of water and some necessary repairs.

This was in January, 1833, the ground was covered with snow, the first the doctor had seen for nearly seven years. He requested to be put ashore, and in his delight took up handfuls of it, pressing it to his face in almost childish glee. He was so weary of being storm-tossed that he did not return to the vessel, but came by land to Philadelphia, where his former pupil, Dr. George H. Bute, had introduced Homeopathy, and at the solicitation of William Geisse,

a German importing merchant of this city, who became his dear and lifelong friend, he remained there instead of returning to Germany, and soon had a large and lucrative practice.

In 1834 he married Marianne Husmann, daughter of Johann Heinrich Martin Husmann, of Hanover, Germany, and later one of the pioneers of Missouri. The ceremony was performed by Dr. Theodore Demme, of the Zion's Kirche, on Fourth Street, another staunch friend of Dr. Hering's until his death. At the house of Mr. William Geisse he met Mr. Friederich Knorr, who had come from Prussia a short time before this. He and Dr. Hering became most intimate friends, as also their wives and children. Together they crossed the Delaware and brought fir trees from Jersey, carrying them on their shoulders followed by shouting boys, for the first German Christmas trees in Philadelphia. The fame and curiosity of these wonders was spread abroad, so that by request evenings were appointed when the doctor's patients came to see the relighted trees, and thus this beautiful German custom was introduced here.

Dr. William Wesselhoeft, a relative of the Husmanns, who by this time had established Homeopathy on a firm footing in Northumberland and Lehigh Counties in Pennsylvania, hearing Dr. Hering had arrived in Philadelphia, came immediately to see him, and proposed a plan for establishing a Homeopathic school at Allentown, to be supported by a stock company, and on January 1st, 1834, Dr. Hering's birthday, a committee from the "Homeopathic Society of Northumberland and Counties Adjacent," consisting of Drs. William Wesselhoeft, H. Detwiller and J. Romig, waited upon him with the result that on April 10th, 1835, Hahnemann's birthday, "The North American Academy of the Homeopathic Healing Art" was founded. It was located at Allentown, Pa., with Dr. Hering as president and principal instructor, and in May of that year Dr. Hering's connection with it began. A large proportion of the funds was raised in Philadelphia under the hearty co-operation of Mr. William Geisse, who had been indefatigably influential in aiding the introduction of Homeopathy in Philadelphia, and also Dr. George H. Bute.

The corner stone for one of the two wings of the main building was laid May 27th, 1835, when Dr. Hering delivered the inaugural address in the courthouse, in the German language, taking for his text Washington's words: "There is but one right way—to seek the truth and steadily pursue it."

Funds believed quite sufficient for the maintenance of the academy until it should become self-supporting had been raised, but the scheme unfortunately miscarried, owing to some petty political intrigues, and the financial crash of 1837, when the banker with whom the endowment fund was deposited made a bad failure, and the money upon which the academy depended for its immediate support was lost.

During his connection with the institution his efforts to disseminate the germs of Homeopathy were indefatigable. He taught, he practiced, wrote books and pamphlets, and had German text-books translated, so as to bring their contents within the reach of all, and thus as one of his friends said: "Became the corner stone around and upon which his associates and co-laborers leaned for support."

At the instigation of his dear friend, William Wesselhoeft, and with the latter's help, he labored extensively with the country clergy, who sought instruction and practiced the new healing art, as laymen upon their parishioners who lived far away from the new doctors. With one of these, the Rev. John Heltrich, Dr. Hering formed a lasting friendship, and had the satisfaction during his lifetime of seeing seven of this man's descendants, sons, grandsons and nephews, join the ranks of Homeopathy.

Although somewhat disheartened by this financial failure, Dr. Hering was not the man to be cast down by it. He returned to his practice in Philadelphia after the first and only disagreement he and his dear friend, Wesselhoeft, ever had. As a matter of course they intended to settle and remain together, either in Philadelphia or Boston, and so when discussing details Dr. Wesselhoeft declared that *he* would take the outdoor practice, visiting the patients, while

Dr. Hering was to be consulting physician, and so have more time for literary work. But Dr. Hering would not acquiesce in this arrangement, as Dr. Wesselhoeft was his senior. They each argued the point, but as neither was willing to yield the harder, more drudging labor to the other, they finally separated, Dr. Wesselhoeft going to Boston, where he remained until his death.

When settling up their accounts another difficulty arose. Both were students, too much engrossed with their profession to be business-like in their monetary affairs. Like Agassiz they had neither time nor thought to devote to their private money matters, and so there arose a question as to which owed the other one hundred dollars, each declared himself the debtor, and insisted on paying the amount to the other. They were both hard to move when convinced they were right, as each felt himself in this case. However, Dr. Hering finally came off victor in the contest, and forced the hundred dollars on his friend. Many years later, when Dr. Hering was telling this incident to his daughter, he smiled, and after a moment's pause, added: "Und der Alte hatte doch recht," "for long afterwards I incidentally found the slip of paper that proved it, but as I had had so much trouble in convincing him that I was right, I thought I wouldn't revive the old matter."

Early in 1840 he lost his second wife, a sorrow which for a long time so seriously preyed upon his health that his recovery was doubtful. During this time he was assisted in his large practice by his two brothers-in-law, Dr. Fritz Husmann and Dr. Jacob Schmidt, both of them his pupils in the healing art.

Several years after the collapse of the Allentown Academy, Dr. Hering was asked by Hahnemann's widow to come to Paris, France, and succeed to her husband's practice, and afterwards he was several times invited to establish himself in London, England. But honorable and tempting as these invitations were, he refused them all. He loved the country of his adoption, "his children's country," as he often called it, and would not expatriate them.

He delighted in doing honor to individuals and great events by festivals. Some time in the early forties, when Friedrich Ludwig Georg von Raumer visited this country, Dr. Hering gathered the prominent Germans of that day in Philadelphia, together in his house in honor of this guest. Of course there was music, singing and feasting. I think the "Alte Maennerchor" was already in existence, and was present, as Dr. Hering was an honorary member of that society. One course, heralded by a blare of trumpets, a "Tusch," and brought in by four "printers' devils" in a huge punch bowl, consisted of sourkrout festooned and crowned with "Wurst."

In 1845 his failing health and a great desire to see his father, brothers and sisters, induced him to visit the Fatherland with his two little children, leaving his practice in the care of Dr. Fritz Husmann, Dr. Schmidt about this time removing to Baltimore.

While in Germany, visiting his relatives and many old friends, he married again, Therese Buchheim, daughter of Christian Friederich Buchheim, army surgeon in Bautzen, Saxony.

Although intending to remain in Europe much longer, the sudden death of his brother-in-law, Dr. Husmann, called him to Philadelphia, early in the summer of 1846.

After several changes of residence, in 1852 he finally secured the property on Twelfth Street, above Arch, that he had for a number of years tried to purchase, as it had, for city limits, a very large garden, and after making some additions, removed there in the summer of that year. Here he lived until his death in July, 1880. He took a great delight in this large garden, and for some years personally superintended the culture and care of it. As soon as the weather permitted in the spring and until late in the autumn what time he could give to his family and friends was spent there, either under a much-loved elm tree, or in a grape arbor where the German afternoon coffee was partaken of.

Ever pursuing his life work with loyal and unfailing ardor, he was broad mindedly interested in literature, art, music and politics, and found his recreation in these.

When the events which induced the Civil War were crystallizing, and ever after, he was a fervent and enthusiastic Unionist. When Fremont was nominated for the Presidency, his whole soul was in the nomination. He earnestly upheld the principles which Fremont, the Pathfinder, represented.

Always ready to take up arms for his beloved mother tongue, the following paragraph in "The Ledger," headed "A Defect in the German Language," one day caught his eye: "It appears from a decision of Judge Campbell, of New York, in a case of the trustees of the Forsyth Street Dutch Reformed Church *v.* the Rev. Frederick Busche, that the Germans have but one word to express *majority* and *plurality,* and that it can only be determined from the context which of these ideas is meant." He immediately wrote to the editor of "The Ledger," saying: "Any schoolboy in Germany could enlighten the Judge, and tell him that *majority* in German would be expressed *Mehrheit*—plurality by *Mehrzahl,* and that if the words were wrongly used it was the fault of him who used them, and not of the language."

He bore testimony to his love for his native country on all occasions, and was always deeply interested in German affairs, and even in his young manhood he had faith in the eventual accomplishment of German unity. In 1826, while on a visit to Cologne, he was present at a banquet, at which he predicted the completion of the great cathedral. His prophecy was received with much mirth, but undaunted he arose and gave as a toast the sentiment: "The Cathedral of Cologne will be completed as surely as Germany will become one and united." The toast was drunk amid much ironical laughter, and the young doctor complimented as an excellent satirist. But he meant no satire; he was in dead earnest, and lived to see Germany united, and the completion of the Cathedral assured.

His faith in the accomplishment of German unity never wavered, and how well he foresaw what was to come is shown in a paper, read by him at a social club, "Die Kanne giesser," and subse-

quently printed in 1860, "Die natürliche Grenze." In September, 1870, he had the happiness of celebrating the victory of German arms and unity by a festival at his own residence, beginning with a choral, "Wie schön leuchtet uns der Morgenstern," by a quartet of brass instruments at 7 A. M., and continuing during the evening, a full account of which was published in the Philadelphia "Evening Bulletin" of September 10th, 1870, and thus manifesting that he was proud of being a native of Germany, of that country which has sent many a great man over the ocean to sow the seeds of German thought and German art among distant nations.

On March 23d, 1876—the Centennial year—his many friends celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his graduation in medicine by various ceremonies and a banquet at the Union League.

He was an early member of the Deutsche Gesellschaft, the Alte Maennerchor, and many other societies, but unlike most Germans in America, who become more or less Americanized, Dr. Hering, though truly loving the country of his adoption, remained ever and all through his life a German as he was born. The house on Twelfth Street was by many called "Little Germany," the home-language was German, his children never addressing him in any other.

His hospitality was unlimited, no German of note who came to this country but visited and rested with him awhile—all were made royally welcome. The anniversaries of the great poets and men of science, and notable events, such as the successful laying of the trans-Atlantic cable, etc., were all occasions for him to gather his friends about him to rejoice with him in German fashion.

When in quest of knowledge, everything else had to give way; time, money, strength, sleep, all were sacrificed for the sake of science. He was often heard to say, "Anything and everything for our cause."

He brought everything to the touchstone of scientific experiment, and was wont to say, "There is no such thing as *belief* in

science. A property or thing *is* or is *not.*" Everything was subjected to trial, and if it did not stand the test, he never strove to bolster it up with a more plausible theory, but cast it off as useless.

A year or two previous to his death he remarked to some of his students: "Well, gentlemen, to-day I have lost one of my best beloved children. For more than twenty years I have been collecting facts and data to establish a pet theory of mine, and I was about to publish and give the results to the world, when to-day I have fully decided that it cannot stand the test of scientific experiment, and so I have buried it out of my sight. Not without a pang—but as my theory is not true—that is the end of it."

He was not a money-getter. His powers did not work in that direction. He did not care to amass this world's goods; but he wanted to be rich in learning, especially in all that pertained to his profession.

He was logical, discriminating, a great lover of nature and close observer of her, a hard student, of unwearied industry.

While Wilhelm Jordan was staying at his house, he remarked to a friend: "Jordan is a man of wonderful ability, but I have lost regard for him. Last evening, in a burst of feeling, he said: 'Oh! how badly it makes one feel to be convinced of error!' I felt indignant at such a statement and replied: 'No, not if one be moved by proper motives. The only feeling of an honest man should be, how glad I am to learn the truth.' I am sorry, but I have lost regard for Jordan."

He afforded the fullest respect to the opinions of others, and largely for that reason always commanded respect. He was an earnest, patient and constant toiler, and died in working harness, seeing patients within a few hours of his death, and literally with pen in hand, correcting proof sheets.

His patients venerated, trusted, loved, almost worshipped him—no other man could supply his place. A friend once said: "I can

liken Dr. Hering's life to nothing more appropriately than to a grand piece of music by Bach, Handel or Hayden, in which, whatever variations are introduced, the original theme is recognizable throughout and at all time, and which gives to the variations their tone, their key, their character and power."

He was a wonderfully industrious man, and found time, besides his large practice, to write and publish many articles, pamphlets and larger works. Although medicine and the natural sciences were his chief love, poetry and music claimed a share of his attention, and some of his leisure moments were devoted to these.

As a student he wrote a number of short stories which were published together with some of his brother's. He also wrote a charming fairy tale for his motherless children in the early forties. Of course, the greater number of his writings are medical—the last and greatest of these, "Guiding Symptoms," was going through the press at the time of his death, and was finished from the mfs. as he had predicted after his death on July 23d, 1880.

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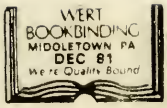

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